

customer outreach. Displaying its commitment to active community engagement, NOVEC reaches beyond the power lines and invests in the community. Customers and members of the general public are invited to take advantage of the services and resources offered by NOVEC, including financial scholarships, legislative tours to expose youth to the federal and state legislative processes, and hands-on engagement through volunteerism.

NOVEC works to inspire and empower the people it serves to take an active role in their community. A time-tested initiative is Operation Round-Up. Program participants voluntarily have their bill rounded up to the next dollar to assist local families who have fallen on hard times to pay for their winter heating bills through donations to heating-assistance programs at six local social service agencies. Since the establishment of Operation Round-Up in 1997, the program has generated close to \$750,000 in heating assistance. Another initiative unique to NOVEC is its relationship with the Hylton Performing Arts Center. NOVEC continues to serve as an instrumental partner through its constant support of the Hylton Center's artists and initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing NOVEC as the 6th Annual Hylton Performing Arts Awards Gala honoree for its involvement and investment in the residents of Northern Virginia.

HONORING MR. JOSEPH KEECHLER

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 29, 2016

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Joseph Keechler, who has volunteered with the City of Sonoma, California and the Sonoma Valley Fire and Rescue Authority (SVFRA) for 40 years. Mr. Keechler inherited his passion for service to his father, Ralph. Together, Joseph and Ralph Keechler have volunteered with the SVFRA for a remarkable 100 years combined.

Building on his family's roots in Sonoma, Mr. Keechler has developed his own strong ties to the area. He earned his Associate's Degree from Santa Rosa Junior College, and with his wife Susan, raised her children, Sam and Jack, in his hometown.

With his long history of service to our community, Mr. Keechler serves as a reliable and trusted leader in Sonoma. He has earned the rank of Captain with the Sonoma Valley Fire and Rescue Authority, serving as a leader of the organization that ensures fire, rescue, and emergency medical services to Sonoma and surrounding communities. Furthermore, Mr. Keechler serves on the Board of the Sonoma Volunteer Firefighters' Association, sharing his firsthand experience for the benefit of other volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Keechler has dedicated his time and knowledge to serving his community for four decades, and Joseph and Ralph Keechler's unique contribution of a combined century of volunteerism is an inspiring example to our country. Therefore, it is fitting and proper to honor him here today.

HONORING WORCESTER COMMUNITY LEADER MARGARET "PEGGY" MIDDAGH

HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 29, 2016

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the accomplishments of a remarkable community leader and environmental advocate from my district, Margaret "Peggy" Middaugh.

Peggy Middaugh's service in Worcester began when she joined the Regional Environmental Council as Executive Director in 1997. Serving in that role for 11 years, Peggy helped to transform REC from a small, volunteer-led organization into one of the region's leading environmental groups.

One of Peggy's signature accomplishments with the REC was creating the Youth Environmental Service Corps. that connected urban youth with nature by providing opportunities for them to hike and maintain Worcester's trails. This program eventually merged with urban gardens to create YouthGROW, an urban agriculture-focused youth development and employment program for low-income teens. YouthGROW currently employs low-income high school teens year-round, giving them the opportunity to gain leadership and jobs skills as they maintain two urban organic farms. Hundreds of youth have graduated from YouthGROW since its inception in 2002.

Under her leadership, the REC built on its foundation of good work and expanded its focus into areas of environmental justice, urban agriculture, toxic use reduction, community gardens and youth development and leadership.

Peggy also built partnerships with state and local officials to implement a Toxic Use Reduction program that focused on educating residents in low income neighborhoods about how to reduce their exposure to household toxics, especially household cleaners and lead. The REC also developed Worcester's first Climate Action Plan under Peggy's leadership.

Peggy has served in a wide range of roles over the years, and the truth is, no matter where she is, Peggy is making a difference. She helped form the Friends of the Five Mile River, established recycling centers in Stow and North Brookfield, and as the outreach coordinator for the Massachusetts Watershed Coalition and a Conservation Commissioner for the Town of North Brookfield; she worked hard to help pass the Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act of 1996.

Peggy has also worked diligently to bring together leaders from different parts of the community to address issues of hunger and food justice. She played a leading role in establishing "UGROW"—a grassroots, citywide community garden network. Today, Worcester has sixty two community gardens, eighteen of which are at city schools, as well as half a dozen urban orchards.

In response to the infestation of the invasive Asian Longhorn Beetle in Central Massachusetts, which led to the destruction of large portions of our urban forest, Peggy founded the Worcester Tree Initiative and acted as its Executive Director until her recent retirement. Under her leadership, the Worcester Tree Initiative brought together government, community and business leaders to develop and implement a plan that resulted in the planting of more than 30,000 trees in Worcester and the surrounding communities.

tiative brought together government, community and business leaders to develop and implement a plan that resulted in the planting of more than 30,000 trees in Worcester and the surrounding communities.

In addition to her work with the Regional Environmental Council and the Worcester Tree Initiative, Peggy has also been active in many community organizations and efforts through her roles as a founding member of the Blackstone Headwaters Coalition; on the Board of Directors of the Family Health Center of Worcester and the Main South Community Development Corporation; as a leader with the Castle Park Task Force; and as a volunteer for the homeless with the Interfaith Hospitality Network.

Peggy has made everything that she has touched better. She is a shining example of what a truly dedicated public servant can achieve. And although Peggy is moving on to new challenges, just like the urban orchards she helped to establish, her contributions to my district will continue to grow and bear fruit for years to come.

RECOGNIZING KENNETH MIKA, MATTHEW MOLLOY, AND COURTNEY PAUL

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 29, 2016

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kenneth Mika, Matthew Molloy, and Courtney Paul for their hard work and dedication to the people of Colorado's Sixth District as interns in my Washington, D.C. office for the spring of the 114th Congress, Second Session.

The work of these young men and women has been exemplary and I know they all have bright futures. They served as tour guides, interacted with constituents, and learned a great deal about our nation's legislative process. I was glad to be able to offer this educational opportunity to these three and look forward to seeing them build their careers in public service.

All three of our interns have made plans to continue their education and professional occupations in Washington, D.C. and throughout the United States. I am certain they will succeed in their new roles and wish them all the best in their future endeavors. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Kenneth Mika, Matthew Molloy, and Courtney Paul for their service this spring.

CONGRATULATING ZACK AND BRIE SMITHEY OF MISS AIMEE B'S TEA ROOM & GALLERY FOR RECEIVING THE CITY OF ST. CHARLES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT 2016 EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARD—SERVICE CATEGORY

HON. BLAINE LUETKEMEYER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 29, 2016

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor constituents of mine, Zack and